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CORRESPONDENCE

**BETWEEN AN AMERICAN AND A RELATIVE
IN GERMANY.**

March-June, 1915.

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J. M. Beck

* * * The remarkable efficiency and energy, the amazing foresight, power of organization and executive ability, the spirit of sacrifice and patriotism, the courage and strength which the German people have demonstrated, are receiving the tribute of universal admiration, not withheld even by your enemies. It is these and similar qualities and characteristics which before the War were bringing Germany nearer day by day to economic world-hegemony, a position which, in my opinion, assuming the undiminished preservation of these qualities and characteristics would assuredly in due course of time have come to be hers, together with its attendant influences and advantages, without war. What induced Germany suddenly to throw overboard the methods of peaceful but none the less real conquest which she had sustained through many years with such admirable diligence and farsightedness, and which had brought her success beyond all precedent and parallel, and instead, to stake on the terrible card of war all that she had already achieved, and all the brilliant prospects that were in sight, is absolutely inexplicable to me, even eliminating the question of right or wrong, and the humanitarian aspect, and viewing the matter purely from the standpoint of national advantage.

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And prevention against whom? There it is only Russia that can come into question, for the English and French Governments would never have received the sanction of their respective Parliaments in undertaking an aggressive war against Germany; moreover, the relative military strength of these latter countries would not, presumably, in two, three, or more years have been greater as compared to Germany's than it was eight months ago. Granting that Russia was preparing for war, and that she might in a few years have considered herself strong enough to pick a quarrel with Germany—the course of the present war, so far as it has gone, proves, if indeed proof were needed, that Germany with her enormous superiority in efficiency, planning, leadership etc., need have had no misgiving as to the ultimate outcome of an attack on her by Russia. I cannot conceive that Germany so underestimated her own power or so overestimated that of the “giant with feet of clay,” as to precipitate a world-war as a measure of prevention on account of the Russians. Granted again that the latter, on some pretext or other, might have provoked war at a moment believed by them to be propitious—then France would have only joined in, if at all, reluctantly, half-heartedly and with her public opinion divided, while the electorate of England would never have allowed their Government to take active part in such a war.

On the 30th of July, Austria at last declared herself ready to enter into direct discussion with Russia, thus offering a breathing spell and a chance for the preservation of peace. If, after that declaration by her ally, Germany had waited three days longer before delivering her ultimatum to Russia, then either the war would have been avoided altogether, or Russia would have had to face the world as the aggressor; and it would be an insult to Germany's efficiency to question that she could have found measures, short of rushing into war, to meet and offset the menace of Russia's mobilization for another three days.

You are wrong if you believe that the present sentiment of America is attributable to prejudiced or untrue Press reports from London or Paris. The American people are fully informed about the German standpoint and German views. Our papers publish daily the official German re-

ports. Many have special correspondents in Germany whose reports are for the most part of pro-German tendency, and all of them are continually publishing extracts from German papers and articles of German authorship; thus, for instance, today, the New York Times prints Dr. Helfferich's long exposé on "The Responsibility for the War" in literal translation from the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung; and the New York Sun publishes two exhaustive articles by General von Bernhardt on the causes and the course of the War up to the present moment.

As a matter of fact, the popular trend of public opinion in America before the War was rather pro-German than pro-English. During the last ten years more and more Americans had learned to know Germany from personal observation, and had returned home enthusiastic and filled with admiration for Germany's greatness and her progressive development. In various activities characteristic of Germany's spirit and methods, as for instance her social legislation, the scientific organization of industry, municipal administration, the stage, and in many other ways, she was acknowledged to be leading the world and to be setting up models for other nations to attempt to follow.

That public sympathy in America has now come to bear preponderantly an anti-German stamp is largely attributable to the following two causes:

First, the blood-guilt for this horrible war is laid at Germany's door. She rejected Sir Edward Grey's invitation to a conference. She sent the ultimatum to Russia which was tantamount to starting war. She declared war on France. The large majority of Americans believe that if, at the critical moment, she had thrown her sword into the scale for the preservation of peace, no nation on earth would have dared to begin war and that Germany would have stood forth as a mightier, more admired and more influential nation than ever before. Secondly, the violation of Belgium and the ruthless treatment of her population. The circumstance that some years ago an exchange of ideas had taken place between an English military attaché and Belgian military authorities, with a view to certain eventualities, is not here regarded as affording any justification for Germany's treaty violation, quite apart from the fact that that treaty violation

was perpetrated *before* Germany had even discovered the documents which showed that such exchange of ideas had taken place.

The tactless and irritating pro-German agitation in this country, carried on by German-Americans under the auspices of German emissaries and partly initiated by them, has done much to consolidate on the opposite side sentiment amongst Americans not of German origin, as have also certain episodes in Germany's conduct of the War, and the manifestation of fanaticism and arrogance, amounting almost to megalomania, which characterize the several collective proclamations issued by Germany's leading educators, scientists and literary men.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.)

Y.

BERLIN, April 27, 1915.

DEAR Y :

My best thanks for your letter of the 22nd March. This interchange of opinions with you is to me extraordinarily interesting and valuable, although our correspondence, so far as it has gone, hardly leads me to hope that we shall reach an agreement.

That you do full justice to the success which has attended the peaceful labours of Germany, is only what I had expected ; but is not that success a proof in itself that in Germany no one wanted the War ? It is neither in accordance with the tendencies of our leading men, nor with the wishes of our people, who, during the last decade have, as you yourself emphasize, done great things and achieved great results through peaceful labour. Considered, therefore, from our point of view, the War cannot be looked upon as a spontaneous event, the avoidance of which depended either on the good intentions or on the skill and wisdom of our Government.

You say " the blood-guilt for this horrible war is laid at Germany's door. The large majority of Americans believe that if, at the critical moment, she had thrown her sword into the scale for the preservation of peace, no nation on

earth would have dared to begin the war." To me, it is incomprehensible how America should have come to this point of view ; indeed, my conviction is that the German Government's publications prove exactly the contrary, namely, that this War has broken out because Russia arbitrarily and deliberately provoked it, and because the British Government committed the grave error, during a number of years, of encouraging jingo-militarist tendencies in Russia and France. As a matter of fact, the actual responsibility for this fearful war rests on the Russian Panславists and the party of the Grand Dukes, who have long been agitating for war with Germany and Austria. And the moral responsibility remains with Asquith, Grey and Churchill, who have been aiming, by means of secret political and military understandings with Russia, France, and even with Belgium, to hamper the development of Germany. Added to that there is the spirit of English naval militarism, the purpose of which is to seek to force England's will upon the whole world by means of her powerful fleet.

Do not forget that Germany is the only great power that has kept the peace throughout 44 years without conquest of territory of any kind by force of arms, while England has annihilated the Boer Republic and made Egypt an English Colony ; Russia has made war on Japan for Manchuria and Korea ; has annexed, with England's support, the whole of the North of Persia and has established herself in Mongolia. America has forcibly deprived Spain of her colonies, France has acquired Tunis and Morocco by force of arms, and Italy has conquered Tripoli.

And in face of all these facts, the responsibility for this War is to be laid at Germany's door !

I presume that besides the various Books of the other Governments you have read the German White Book, which surely demonstrates how strenuous were the efforts of the German Government up to the very last moment, to preserve peace. The telegram which the German Emperor exchanged with the Czar and the King of England testify to this. These endeavors were brought to an abrupt conclusion by the sudden order for the mobilization of the entire Russian Army. You say that it was not necessary for Germany immediately thereupon to declare war. That

is exactly the mistake which is so frequently made in foreign countries. Germany could *not* calmly wait till Russia had mobilized her powerful and as the present war proves, almost inexhaustible army, because she would then have been crushed between the armies of the East and West. She was bound to endeavor to make up, to some extent at least, by the rapidity of her military operations, for the vast inferiority in the number of men she could, together with Austria, put in the field against Russia and France.

As regards Belgium, so much untruth has been disseminated on this subject by the Press of hostile countries, that I feel myself unable to contradict and disprove specifically this mass of misleading statements. But again I say that Grey is primarily responsible for the frightful misfortune which has come upon that country. The English Blue Book proves that the King of Belgium had asked the King of England to use diplomatic intervention in favor of the preservation of Belgian integrity, and that in reply Edward Grey requested the Belgian Government to oppose Germany by force of arms. In this way, he drove the Belgians into a war which they quite evidently had wished to avoid. What would have happened to Belgium if she had allowed the Germans to march through unopposed, as the German Government demanded? The German troops would have passed through Belgium, no harm would have come to the people, and the country would afterwards have received full compensation for any damage done, as in the case of Luxemburg. But that did not suit Grey's purpose!

You rightly say that the German march through Belgium took place before the discovery of the documents disclosing the agreements which Belgium had made with France and England. It is true that the march into Belgium was considered by the Germans to be a military necessity. It *was* such, in view of the uncertain attitude of the Belgian Government who had, as a matter of fact, long since forfeited their claim to neutrality by their secret understanding with France and England. That such understandings existed was a fact known to the German Government *before the outbreak of the war*; though it is true we were not informed as to their wording, nor as to the extent of their sig-

nificance. But no German General could have taken upon himself the responsibility of exposing the German Army to a sudden advance of French and English troops through Belgium. That would have resulted in the annihilation of the German Army.

I admit that the methods of our American emissaries as also the statements of all sorts of Professors and similar spokesmen were not very happily chosen. But in many circles with us there was a strong feeling that something had to be done to counteract those monstrous, fantastic lies of the English Press. I too should have preferred if no steps at all had been taken on these lines and we should have rested on the eminently true remark of old General Schlieffen, that "in war, after all, the only thing that counts is those silly old victories."

One thing, however, is beyond all question,—Not German militarism, but the militarism of the Powers of the Entente Cordiale and English navalism are responsible for the frightful catastrophe which has come upon the world. There is in fact no such thing as German militarism. There is only an undivided German nation, which is absolutely determined to fight till victory has been achieved over these Powers, who have united in hate and envy to destroy Germany. There is no dissension between the German Government and the German people. The latter are fully aware who bear the guilt for this war, and the knowledge of how large a share of the guilt rests on England's shoulders has resulted in Germany's feelings at present being anything but friendly toward Eng and ; and, moreover, a very long time will have to elapse before she forgets the crime which England has committed. The German people understand perfectly that racial animosity might have brought about a conflict between Russia and Germany, and that France would not desert her ally. But the participation of England in a war of annihilation against a people descended from her own stock—a war in which she has called to her aid Japanese, Indians, etc., etc., against a European nation—that is felt by Germany to be a shameful crime against civilization and humanity, which will go down in history as a stain on the reputation of England.

This also will not lightly be forgotten in Germany—that

the war is really being carried on to-day by America, since that country, in order that some of her industries may reap financial benefit, is supplying the whole war material for the allied armies, and complacently submits to being prevented by them from supplying Germany. Such weakness—which America attempts to cover up by calling it “neutrality” will not be without its consequences, either in Germany or in other countries.

I join with you in sincerely hoping that we shall soon be delivered from the curse of this frightful war, although I do not believe that such delivery will come to us in the near future.

Yours sincerely
(Sgd.) X.

NEW YORK, June 28, 1915.

DEAR X.:

Many thanks for your very interesting letter of April 27th. The spirit which animates Germany is indeed a great and mighty one—a spirit of unity and brotherhood amongst her people, of willing sacrifice and heroic striving, coupled with the passionate conviction and faith that your cause is just and righteous, that it must and will win, and that not only is victory a necessity for your national existence, but that in its train it will bring blessings to the whole universe.

Wherever and whenever in the world's history such a spirit, born of the stirring-up of the profoundest depths of national or religious feeling, has manifested itself, it has invariably been attended by a more or less marked fanaticism among the people concerned, by a condition of mind easily comprehensible as a psychological phenomenon, but acutely prejudicial to the capacity for preserving an objective point of view, and for arriving at impartial judgments. It is but natural that in the atmosphere which surrounds you and in existing circumstances even a man of such sober, clear and independent mentality as yourself, should think and feel in the way manifested by your letter. Even were it in my power, I should not try at this

juncture to shake your faith, just as I should never think of attempting to disturb the faith of a religious man. But as you ask me to continue this exchange of opinions with you, and just because I am so certain that my views and arguments cannot affect the firmness of your convictions at present or modify the intensity of your patriotic feelings, I will further endeavor to make plain to you my ideas as to this infinitely deplorable and accursed war.

Speaking generally, they are the views also of the vast majority of thinking people in America, and, I would remind you that America as a whole, by reason of the racial composition of her population, is essentially free from national prejudice or racial bias. With her many millions of inhabitants of German origin, her disposition could not be anti-German in the ordinary course of things—and indeed never was so before the war. With her millions of Jews and her liberal tendencies she cannot be pro-Russian. With her historical development in the course of which her only serious wars have been against England (which country, moreover, during the critical years of the Civil War between North and South, evidenced inclination to favor the South) and for many other reasons, her disposition cannot be that of an English partisan—and was not so before the war. The predominant sentiment of the American people in the Boer War was strongly anti-English, in the Balkan War their sympathies were pro-Turkish, in the Italian-Turkish War, anti-Italian, in the Russo-Japanese War, pro-Japanese, although it was fully realized that from the point of view of America's material and national interests, the strengthening of Japan was hardly desirable.

It may sound to you very improbable, but it is none the less true, that America, of all the great nations, is probably the one least swayed by eagerness to attain material advantage for herself through her international policies (which, possibly, may not arise from any particular virtue in her people, but may be rather the result of her geographical and economic situation). Although not a land as yet of the highest degree of culture, she is a land of high and genuine humanitarianism and of a certain naive idealism. She gave back to China the indemnity resulting

from the Boxer Rebellion; to Spain, conquered and helpless, she paid, entirely of her own free will, an indemnity for the Philippines; she refused to annex Cuba and she abstained, in spite of strong provocation, from appropriating Mexico.

I hear your ironic rejoinder, "and out of pure humanitarianism, you supply arms to our enemies, and thus prolong the War". The answer lies in the accentuation of the last four words, which can only mean that, but for the American supply of arms, the Allies, from lack of ammunition, would speedily be defeated, *i. e.* America is to co-operate in preserving for that country which has most extensively and actively prepared for war, the full and lasting advantage of that preparation. That would mean to put a premium on war preparations, on an armed and therefore necessarily precarious peace; for it is but human nature that, given a difference which he considers serious enough to constitute a quarrel, a man armed to the teeth should be less inclined to settle the matter peaceably than one who is less well prepared for a fight.

Apart from that, the German complaint about the prolongation of the war through the American supply of arms is proof in itself that the refusal of such supplies would constitute a positive act of partiality in favor of Germany. And the great majority of Americans are convinced that the ruling powers of Germany and Austria, though not perhaps the people themselves, are responsible for the outbreak of the war; that they have sinned against humanity and justice; that at least France and England did not want war, that therefore its advent found them in a comparatively unprepared state, and that it would constitute a decided, serious and unjustifiable action of far reaching effect against the Allies if America were to stop the supply of arms (especially in view of the fact that as a direct consequence of the treaty-defying invasion of Belgium, you are in possession of the Belgian arms factories and iron mines and of about 75% of all the ore-producing capacity of France).

For neutrals to supply war materials to belligerents is an ancient, unquestioned right, recognized by international law and frequently practised by yourselves. To alter, during the course of a war, a practice sanctioned by the law of

nations and hitherto always followed, would be a flagrant breach of neutrality, for it would necessarily help one side and harm the other. The fact that we at one time forbade the export of arms to Mexico affords no argument in favor of the German contention, for there it was not a question of war between nations, but of civil war, apart from the consideration of the danger that such arms might eventually be used against America herself, given the possibility that intervention by us in Mexico might become a necessity.

Commissions from Germany for the supply of arms would have been as acceptable to our factories as those from the Allies. It is not America's fault if the German fleet does not break through the British cordon and open the way for sea communication with Germany. The superiority of the British fleet and the resulting consequences must have been known to Germany before she permitted the outbreak of this horrible war, and she has no right to make a grievance of these consequences, any more than the Allies have a right to complain of Germany's superior preparedness and the greater perfection of her instruments of war. To believe American public opinion influenced by the profits which come to this country from the supply of arms, is to misunderstand completely the American mode of thought and feeling, apart from the fact that these profits go into but very few pockets and that public opinion here is anything but complacent towards large corporations and capitalists and is by no means inclined to view with favor the gathering in of these huge profits by a very limited number of individuals and concerns.

You quote with approval General von Schlieffen's remark that "in war, after all, the only thing that counts is those silly old victories". You would surely not say that in the individual's daily struggle for existence or in competitive industrial strife, "the only thing that counts" is success. Rather you would be the first to grant, as you have always demonstrated in your own mode of thought and action, that there are certain ethical limitations, laid down by the conscience and the moral conceptions of humanity, which must be respected in the struggle for success, however keen, even if the very existence of the individual and the maintenance of wife and child be at stake. Schlieffen's utterance throws

overboard everything that civilization and the humanitarian progress of centuries have accomplished towards lessening the cruelty, the hatred and the suffering engendered by war, and towards protecting non-combatants, as far as possible, from its terrors. It is tantamount to the doctrine of the fanatical Jesuit, "The end justifies the means."

And it is this very fact, viz. that Germany in her conduct of this war has acted upon a doctrine applied in none of her previous wars, but which has now evidently assumed the power of a national obsession, namely, that everything, literally everything, which tends to ensure victory is permitted to her, and indeed called for,—from the violation of innocent Belgium in defiance of solemn treaty, and the treatment inflicted on her people, to the bombardment, even without warning, of open places (which Germany was the first to practice), the destruction of great monuments of art which belonged to all humankind, as in Rheims, and Louvain, the Lusitania horror, the strewing of mines broadcast, the use of poisonous gases causing torturing death or incurable disease, the taking of hostages, arbitrary imposition of monetary indemnities and penalties, etc.—it is these facts that the non-combatant nations charge against Germany, apart from the responsibility for the war, and it is in them that may be found the main reason why public opinion in neutral countries has more and more turned against her as the war went on.

I say "innocent Belgium," for it is entirely evident that the Belgian-English pourparlers, of which Germany discovered documentary evidence, merely related to the eventuality of Germany's violating her neutrality and therefore in no way constituted a relinquishment of neutrality on Belgium's part. In so far as, (manifestly as a result of excessive zeal on the part of the English military attaché in question) these pourparlers did not keep strictly within these limits, they were formerly and categorically rejected and disavowed, by both the Belgian and English Governments (as is shown by official papers which have been published)—and it cannot be doubted that these proceedings of disavowal were entirely *bona fide*, for they took place at a time and in cir-

cumstances when no one could possibly have imagined that the correspondence evidencing them would ever see the light of day. Germany's reasoning that she was compelled to take the initiative in violating the treaty of neutrality in order to avoid the imminent danger that England and France would do so first and thereupon advance troops against her through Belgium, is, even if such reasoning were morally admissible, no valid argument; for only a few days before, England and France had solemnly pledged themselves before the whole world to respect Belgium's neutrality.

And if, as you believe, England had been planning for years to attack Germany via Belgium, would she not then have had in readiness an invading force coming somewhere near to being adequate for such an undertaking instead of the mere bagatelle of barely 75,000 or 100,000 men, which in the first months of the war actually constituted her whole available continental fighting force? To any one of unprejudiced judgment there remains, therefore, no choice but to reach the conclusion that Germany's violation of Belgium was not perpetrated as a measure of protection, but, as the Chancellor in fact admitted in his first speech on the subject in the Reichstag, simply because "in war the only thing that counts is those silly old victories."

Not as you say, in obedience to England's command (what power had England either to command or enforce her commands?), but from a compelling impulse of national honor did Belgium oppose the German breach of neutrality with force of arms, though it would evidently have been to her material interest to comply with Germany's summons or at any rate to offer merely nominal resistance. Holland and Switzerland would have done the same thing under similar circumstances, as would any other self-respecting nation. Moreover, what weight could Belgium attach to Germany's promise of immunity in case of her yielding, at the very moment when Germany by her own act was demonstrating but too clearly how little she considered herself bound by her promise or indeed by a solemn international treaty?

What the Germans have accomplished on the battlefields, as well as within their own country is proof of such great national qualities, that it compels the tribute of admira-

tion, even from your enemies—qualities which would indeed have demonstrated Germany's superiority and gone far to justify her claim to hegemony, if they were not linked unfortunately—at least among your ruling classes and intellectual leaders—with ways of thought and action which are anti-humanitarian, oppressive and generally intolerable to the rest of the world.

The theory of "frightfulness" in the conduct of warfare which Germany now preaches and practices is no new discovery. On the contrary it is very ancient—so old, in fact, that the civilized world hardly remembered it any longer and had for generations considered it discarded and superseded, along with much else which the human race had thought to have overcome and left behind in the progress of culture and humanity achieved by the strenuous toil and suffering of many centuries. Such words and ideas are met with contempt and derision by your spokesmen and termed mere phrases and sentimentality. If these are mere phrases, then the whole upward struggle of the world for endless years past has been based upon and aiming at phrases and sentimentality.

In a German paper I read lately an article by one of your professors of international law, in which he maintains, incredible though it may seem, evidently completely unconscious of the monstrosity of his logic, that, because the Russians in their invasion of East Prussia acted like barbarians, therefore you had the unquestioned right, as a measure of reprisal, to bombard and destroy Oxford and Cambridge!!

And what have you gained from your "frightfulness"? Your victories are due to quite other qualities. By your "frightfulness," you have steeled your enemies to the utmost limit of sacrifice, you have embittered neutral opinion, you have disappointed and grieved your friends and "sown dragon's teeth," the fruits of which will arise against you many years even after the conclusion of peace. How differently would you now be judged if you had tempered your mighty power with mercy and self-restraint, if with the consciousness and use of superior strength and ability you had coupled chivalry and generosity.

You say that Germany is the only great power which has kept the peace for 44 years, and made no conquest of territory of any kind by force of arms. Whilst in reference to this statement, it should be recalled that in the course of these 44 years Germany, virtually by force, has taken a strategically important piece of China, waged war against the Hereros, annexed colonies in Africa and in the Pacific (and in exchange for one of them received the extremely valuable island of Heligoland), and established a firm footing in Asia Minor,—yet, speaking generally, the world is bound to recognize with gratitude and admiration that from 1871 to 1914 Germany has refrained from using her enormous military power in attempts at conquest. Has she had cause to complain of the results of this wise and farseeing policy? She has grown more powerful in that comparatively short space of time than any other country. In the well-being of her people, in her wealth and prestige she has advanced and flourished as no other nation. Her industries, her merchant marine have brought her conquest and triumph unequalled in the world's economic history, and which find a parallel only in the wonderful military achievements of the Napoleonic era. Without firing a gun she had turned Holland and Belgium practically into German dependencies and achieved predominance in Turkey, while her influence in South America and Asia was daily on the increase. Even in the British colonies the victorious efficiency of the German commercial conquerors made itself felt more and more.

And this newly discovered naval militarism of England which, you say, "is seeking to force England's will upon the whole world by the force of her mighty fleet", what has it ever done to bar the way to your commerce? Absolutely nothing. I happened a few days ago to read a letter of an American traveler, from which I quote the following extracts :

"Not many years ago, I sat on the club veranda at Singapore and counted twenty-five funnels of a single German steamer line. From Singapore I went to North Borneo ; there was but one line, a German, and that line carried the British mail. Later I went to Siam from Singapore. It was on a steamer of this same German line, carrying British

mail. There was no other. Thence I went to Hongkong by the same excellent German line. Later I went to Australia—it was by one of this same line. To Java and the Eastern Archipelago, to Penang—it was always this vast German Company, doing not only all the German, but the British mail service as well. The German traders, with whom I mix freely, marveled at the infantile generosity with which Great Britain opened all her ports to German enterprise, although longheaded people shook their heads at the thought of German skippers having a better acquaintance with British waters than their own people. Nowhere in the British colonial world have I found the slightest evidence of commercial monopoly and certainly no favoring of Englishmen at the expense of Germans. Even in India the German commercial traveler has roamed at will and driven Englishmen out of business under the very noses of the Calcutta Council.

“In the Imperial German colonies competing English traders have been treated to a systematic course of petty official restrictions so vexatious that finally they have given up the attempt to do business under German conditions. When I was in German New Guinea this official persecution went so far that a British trading steamer was even forbidden to get water, in order to force it to abandon trade with the natives of that neighborhood.

“Some British colonies do discriminate in favor of the mother country, but the colonies who do that are self-governing and therefore beyond the mother country’s control in economic matters, like Canada. But in so-called Crown colonies like Hongkong, the German trader has the same advantage as every other.”

England has not abused her power at sea, at least since the 18th century, any more than you had, up till now, abused your power on land. She has not only not stood in the way of your development, but on the contrary has given you fair and free access to her markets with unparalleled liberality.

That England should now make every endeavor to carry on a strict sea-blockade against Germany and should do so in a manner which takes account of the existing circumstances and novel instruments of naval warfare, is, in the opinion of our leading lawyers, her perfect right, as far at least as it is a matter only between her and Germany. In the same way North America, during the four years of the Civil War, did all in her power compatible with the law of

nations to prevent, both directly and indirectly, export and import traffic through Southern harbors. It is true that dissatisfaction has been caused in this country by the interference of England with American commerce, that such dissatisfaction is on the increase and is likely to lead in the early future to our Government's making a vigorous protest, but the objections to England's practice are in no wise founded on any idea of questioning the admissibility under international law of a complete and effective blockade. To call this perfectly natural and legitimate and frequently practiced measure of warfare "a war of starvation" against women and children is a good deal of an exaggeration; for, though somewhat inconvenienced, you are very far from being in danger of starvation, as all your spokesmen not only admit but defiantly proclaim.

That against that blockade as well as for the destruction of English commerce you are making use of your amazingly perfected submarines appears to me entirely justified, so long as in that use you keep within the limits of legitimate warfare. Nor do I deny that England, in certain respects, has arbitrarily and, it seems, rather fatuously interfered with the rights of neutrals, that she has employed against you some irritating measures of petty and apparently purposeless chicanery and given you cause for resentment by certain vindictive and perhaps unfair provisions and procedures enacted at the very start of the war against German firms and German interests within English jurisdiction. It must also, I believe, be admitted that you were justified in looking upon some of the edicts of the boastful Winston Churchill, with reference to the conduct of English merchant vessels, as provocations which gave you legitimate ground for retaliation within recognized limitations.

But that Germany should have used these provocations and this phrase of "starvation warfare" as a basis for *reprisals which actually do constitute warfare against women and children*, is a blow in the face to the world's conscience. Against England's infringements of the strict limits of neutral rights and against the subjecting of neutrals to certain unjust, irritating and rather senseless annoyances, America has not failed to protest; she has in several cases

received satisfaction and acceptable assurances, and she ought to (and, I have no doubt, will) insist firmly on her rights in the cases still under discussion. But,—and that makes the vast difference between the English and the German infractions of the rights of neutrals—*in no single case have such acts on the part of England involved the sacrifice of a human life.*

You say that Germany is not responsible for the war. It is nevertheless a fact that it was Germany who first *declared* war. Perhaps it would have come even if not declared by Germany, but in that “perhaps” lies a fearful burden of responsibility. You speak of the “vast Austro-German inferiority” in fighting men, as compared to France and Russia, which you had to counteract by rapidity and initiative of proceeding. First, this inferiority of your 121 millions to the Franco-Russian 200 millions (the English, *at that time*, could not have entered into your reckoning) is not such a “vast” one, even on paper, when one considers how many millions of the Russians could not for many months be included in the reckoning, in consequence of the huge distances separating them from the scene of action. Secondly, you had the enormous advantage of strategic railroads, which the Russians lacked. Thirdly, you and the Austrians occupying contiguous territory and holding the inner lines were able to move your troops from East to West, and *vice versa*, as occasion demanded, while the Russians and French were separated and had to fight on the outer lines; and, fourthly, every one knows that in modern warfare far less depends on the number of men than on preparation, leadership and ammunition. And that in these respects the Russians certainly, and at the outset also the French, labored under a “vast inferiority,” is not open to question. It cannot be admitted therefore that the fact of the Russian mobilization made it a necessity for you to precipitate war, especially on the very day when Austria, who was in a far more exposed position than you, declared herself ready at last, notwithstanding the Russian mobilization, to enter into direct diplomatic discussion with Russia.

On the 30th and 31st of July respectively, Sir Edward Grey telegraphed the following to the English Ambassador in Berlin for transmission to the Imperial Chancellor :

" * * * You should speak to the Chancellor in the above sense, and add most earnestly that one way of maintaining good relations between England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe. If we succeed in this object, the mutual relations of Germany and England will, I believe, be *ipso facto* improved and strengthened. For that object his Majesty's Government will work in that way with all sincerity and good will.

" And I will say this : If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, *my own endeavor will be to promote some arrangement, to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia and ourselves, jointly or separately.* I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, *but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto.*

" *I said to the German Ambassador this morning that if Germany could get any reasonable proposal put-forward which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace, and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris, and go to the length of saying that if Russia and France would not accept it, his Majesty's Government would have nothing more to do with the consequences ; that, otherwise, I told the German Ambassador that if France became involved we should be drawn in."*

Is this the language of one seeking a quarrel? Why did not Germany act upon the suggestions put forth so urgently, ringing so manifestly true and bearing so evidently the stamp of good faith? Why was the calamity of war thrust upon the world in such hot haste, that you did not even previously inform, far less consult, your then allies, the Italians, in spite of the provisions of the Triple Alliance? Is it not proved by the declarations which Giolitti—who is certainly not hostile to Germany—delivered before the Italian Parliament about six months ago, that Austria wanted to make war even two years ago? I know enough

of the prevailing sentiments in England and France before the war, as well as of the tendencies of the political leaders and other leading men in those countries to be absolutely positive that, apart from a few individuals given to noise-making, but not possessing weight or real influence, those countries did not want war.

On the other hand, I agree with you in believing that the Pan-Slavist party in Russia did plan to bring on war, though they did not want it yet, and though it is doubtful whether they would have succeeded in their design, if met by a firm, wise and conciliatory policy on the part of Germany and Austria. These opponents (the Russians), *by themselves*, as results thus far have shown, and as seemed evident in advance to sober observers, you need never to have considered as your peers in a military sense. Rather than take the awful responsibility of initiating war, and thus uniting England, France and Russia wholeheartedly against you, you could well have afforded, in calm confidence in your superior efficiency and preparation, to take the lesser risk of letting the Russians come on whenever, in fatuous arrogance, they might have believed themselves strong enough to tackle you and Austria. In an offensive war, undertaken by Russia, France would have joined, if at all, only half heartedly, and with her public opinion strongly divided; and no English Government, however jingo-militarist, would have obtained the sanction of Parliament to take part in such a war. Your ally, Italy, would in that case not have forsaken you. The public opinion and moral support of the neutral nations would have been strongly with you. You would presumably, under such circumstances, have given the Russians a bad beating, and the world in general would have rejoiced exceedingly at the aggressor's discomfiture.

That the large majority of the people of Germany did not want war, I do not doubt, although (*as was not the case in England and France*) there has been in existence in your country for years a rather alarmingly active and influential party whose open aim was war, and particularly a reckoning with England. Many of your intellectuals and particularly many of the teachers of your youth, had come to preach the deification of sheer might, and to proclaim with

fanatical arrogance the doctrine that Germany, being the chosen people, superior to all others, was therefore not only permitted, but, indeed called upon, to impose the blessings of its civilization and "Kultur" upon other countries, by force if necessary, and to help itself to such of their possessions as it deemed necessary for the fulfilment of its destiny. I believe it is not too much to say that that doctrine, and the spirit on which it rested, and from which it sprang, are very much akin, in their intolerance, their self-righteous assumption of a world-improving mission, in their lack of understanding of and their contemptuous disallowance for the differing viewpoints, qualities and methods of others, to the doctrines and the spirit that lay at the bottom of the religious wars throughout the long and evil years when Catholics and Protestants killed one another and wrought appalling bloodshed, destruction and ruin, for the purpose of conferring upon their respective countries the blessings of "the true religion." Liberal press organs and calm-thinking men in Germany frequently before the war expressed their disapproval of, and misgivings at such preachings and the tendencies and agitation of the jingo party, though naturally you now all stand together and have put aside for the time being the party differences and conflicting opinions and points of view which prevailed prior to the war.

Be this as it may, I agree with you in believing, notwithstanding the sustained machinations of the war party, that the Kaiser and the Chancellor up to a certain fatal moment, when they yielded their judgment to others, meant *bona fide* to preserve peace, and that the mass of the German people did not want war and are entirely honest in their unanimous belief that Germany is not responsible for the war, though unfortunately the facts prove the contrary.

It is conceivable that you might have been justified in coming forward boldly and straightforwardly and saying to the Triple Entente: "We are 70 million strong; we have demonstrated to the world our capabilities in every department of human endeavor and human achievement. We require (or, at least, our people believe, rightly or wrongly, that we require) wider territorial scope for our national development than we possess in our own country or in our

colonies, besides an assurance of greater security in the conditions of our national existence. You have the best part of the world, far more than you require. See to it that an appropriate place is made for us, or, at least, give us a free hand to conclude mutually agreeable arrangements with Belgium, Portugal, etc., in respect of their oversea possessions. Then you will find us ready for an understanding with you, to ensure peace and to make an end, at last, to these continually recurring alarms of war, which are wearing out the nerves and the purse of the whole world. To this end, let us call a conference. Meanwhile, no one is to increase the armaments they at present possess, let alone mobilize. But if you are not willing to give us a fair show peaceably, then we warn you look out for trouble."

In my opinion, that warning would not have had to be translated into action, for in due course things were bound to come your way by the very force of cause and effect. With a little skill and tact and insight, (which traits, as you will probably admit, have hardly been outstanding features of German diplomacy since Bismarck), together with a little patience, everything you could reasonably ask would have been yours in the course of the next 10 or 15 years. But if the Triple Entente had met a request of the nature of the foregoing with a "*non-possumus*," or had made no reasonably acceptable offer, and you, after final warning, had resorted to the arbitrament of war, then the case would have worn a very different aspect than it has now, and many unprejudiced men amongst neutral people would have looked upon your view points and conduct as not devoid of justification, instead of turning away with disgust from the sophistries of your writers, seeking to demonstrate that you poor innocent lambs were fallen upon in order to be dragged to the slaughter-house. As a matter of fact, however, it is my belief that such a declaration delivered by you to the Triple Entente, firm and determined in spirit and meaning, but friendly and persuasive in language, would have led not to war, but to a lasting understanding.

To sum up: Until 10 years ago, England's relations with you were good—indeed more than good, as is shown, for instance, by the cession of Heligoland. If, as you assert,

hate and envy and ill-will, because of Germany's phenomenal development, and of her increasing strength and push as a competitor in the markets of the world, had been the moving force in shaping England's attitude towards you, then the motive for hostile conduct would have existed at that time just as at present. As a matter of fact, England's sentiment towards Germany changed only simultaneously with and as the result of your aggressive program of naval construction, and also as a result of the manifestation in word, in writing and in deed, of certain alarming and menacing tendencies to which, it is true, more significance and importance probably were attached abroad than in Germany itself—more, perhaps, than they deserved. That program England came to consider, most naturally, as directed mainly against herself and as a serious menace to her most vital interests and to the conditions of her very existence, just as Germany would have been uneasy if Russia had suddenly announced a policy of concentrating an enormous fleet in the Baltic (the parallel, though, is not at all perfect, because for you the sea does not mean anything like as much as it does and must mean for England). That naval policy, together with the arguments which the German Government's spokesmen adduced for it and the above mentioned manifestations and agitations, caused very serious and lasting apprehensions in England and gradually drove her to the Entente with France, and through it, unfortunately perhaps but necessarily, also with Russia, not as an offensive, but as a defensive measure—a policy, by the way, the wisdom of which, in the interest of England and France and of the peace of the world, I have always felt inclined to doubt, however comprehensible and natural it was under the circumstances. Likewise, I have always doubted the wisdom of the creation of your enormous fleet, a view which was shared by some of your best political thinkers and which results seem to justify.

2. The direct cause of the war was that Austria, since Aehrenthal's laurels, has been possessed by the fixed idea that she could and ought to adopt a "dashing" policy. There is nothing more dangerous than the foolish and reckless daring of feebleness, when, as happens at times, it is

suddenly seized with a mania for heroics. As a matter of fact, as I perceived from a letter received here a few days before the outbreak of the war and originating from a particularly authoritative source in Vienna, Austria entirely failed to realize the portentous significance and the inevitable consequences of her unheard-of ultimatum to Serbia, and believed that she would be left undisturbed to play the conqueror at the expense of that poor little country. Unfortunately, Germany, did not see fit to put a stop to that extremely dangerous playing with fire. It seems on the contrary, that the German Ambassador in Vienna actively encouraged it.

3. When finally the crisis had come with all its terrible meaning, and at the last moment Austria began to get nervous and to waver in the face of the danger of a world catastrophe, the Government and the sober and sensible thinking majority of the German people allowed themselves to be swept off their feet by the jingo party, who had for years been bent upon war, and to be rushed by it into the belief that the Russian mobilization signified a menace dangerous to Germany's very existence, and that every day of delay in meeting that danger might mean disastrous consequences. It is not the first time that an attempt has been made by that party to bring the Kaiser and his people suddenly face to face with a situation which they meant should spell war—a war which they felt certain would end in quick and decisive German victory. At least one flagrant example of such manoeuvring is known to me through personal knowledge of the facts.

That the jingo party, against what I believe to have been the tendencies of the Kaiser's and the Chancellor's policies, succeeded at last in their fateful design, although the manifest interests and doubtless the inclination of the masses of your people were for the maintenance of peace, is explainable only by the Germans' amazing lack of understanding (doubly amazing in a people so intelligent and instructed and so successful in its commercial dealings with the rest of the world) for the psychology as distinguished from the outward peculiarities, methods and habits, for the *deeper* qualities, sentiments, ideals, modes of thought and characteristics of other nations—a lack of understanding which is strikingly exemplified in your complete misjudg-

ment as to the cohesive power of the British Empire and as to the loyalty of its component parts and subject races, by your gross underestimate of France and by your general miscalculation as to how the peoples challenged by you would react to the supreme test of war.

That Austria and Russia through their mobilizations and other measures originating from a mixture of bluff and fear, managed to get each other into an utterly unreasoning state of nerves, is entirely comprehensible. They did not trust each other, and above all, they did not trust themselves, their own strength and preparedness. But Germany, in the knowledge of her powerful moral and military superiority, and of her incomparable war machine, perfect and ready in every detail, could have, and ought to have dominated the confusion and danger of the situation with the sang-froid and self-confidence born of strength, instead of allowing herself to be swept along by the sinister currents leading to an ocean of blood. And if Germany, with trembling Europe hanging on her words, had proclaimed boldly "There shall be peace," and thus by her veto had saved the world from the curse of this war, she would not only have done a splendidly meritorious deed, unequalled in the world's history, which would have brought her immortal fame and would have been greeted by the joyous acclaim of all peoples, but she would have gained by that very act the uncontested leadership amongst the nations, and from their gratitude for being freed from the nightmare of war's menace, she would readily have obtained (as intimated by Sir Edward Grey in his above mentioned telegram) compliance with any reasonable demand she might have put forward for the extension of the scope of her development and influence.

4. That England *in an aggressive war waged by Germany and Austria* against France and Russia, was bound to throw in her lot with the latter countries, seemed to me so obvious, once the Entente existed, that I was quite unable, at the time, to understand Germany's outburst of surprise and fury against England. Alliance or Entente, call it what you will,—had England backed out in that crisis, it would have been a miserable breach of faith on her part, by which she would have forfeited her place in the world's respect and

which would have been bitterly resented by her former friends and left her completely isolated henceforth. Moreover, apart from all moral obligations and the compelling force of political considerations, she could have felt all the less tempted to enter into a separate agreement with Germany at that critical juncture and to remain neutral, as the latter at that very moment had demonstrated that she did not consider herself bound by any treaty, if military interests seemed to her to make the breach of such treaty advisable, and therefore England could by no means feel assured that, if an arrangement between the two countries had been effected, it would be respected by Germany, in case at any given moment it appeared to her government to be requisite from the point of view of military necessity or even mere advantage to ignore such agreement.

You call it a hideous crime and eternal shame that the English "called to their aid" against you the Japanese and the Indians. As far as Japanese military aid is concerned, it has been practically limited to action in China, and thus has not to any material degree influenced the European war. And as regards the relatively inconsiderable number of Indians that England brought over, the simple fact is that these few brigades or divisions form part of the small standing army that she possessed (the very smallness of which is further proof of how little she had contemplated war). In her critical situation, and with her vast lack of trained troops, she called in these detachments which are commanded by English officers, and I feel certain that an unprejudiced judgment can see neither crime nor shame in that act, any more than you are subject to reproach for accepting the military aid of Turks and Arabs.

5. When a country in so short a time has made such unexampled progress as Germany, and through her own capacity and the favor of fate has achieved so much of wealth, power and well-being for her people, she can well afford to indulge in the luxury of modesty and of a conciliatory disposition. A country so blessed ought to thank God that all is going so well with her, and recognize that such brilliant success is bound to produce a certain amount of irritation and jealousy, just as it does in the case of an eminently successful individual. While rejoicing in her

achievement, she ought to carefully refrain from boasting and from flaunting her superiority in the face of the world. While unceasingly continuing to strive and build up, she ought to do so tactfully and with all possible consideration for her less successful neighbors. She should know how to restrain herself and wisely to keep her ambitions within bounds, to live and let live, to regard without jealousy or envy, possessions which are the heritage of others less efficient than herself, and to leave it to time, slowly but surely, to do its work in rewarding merit and punishing inefficiency and sloth.

Have you thought and acted thus? Have you not, on the contrary, in the justified consciousness of your greater efficiency and more strenuous effort allowed the fact of the great inherited advantages possessed by others to become a thorn in the flesh, and an ever rankling bitter grievance, which dimmed your contentment and soured the joy at your achievements? Have you not made other nations your enemies—not by your success in open competition with them, which I grant was far from pleasing to them, but to which in the end they had come to accommodate themselves as to an unavoidable evil—but by the manner and matter of your writing, speaking and acting, and by thrusting before them aims and visions of the future, calculated to cause them most serious alarm and apprehension, and thus eventually led them to unite against you—not, as you think, through envy or hate, but through the much more powerful motives of self-preservation, and of fear of your aims and intentions?

In this letter, which, I am sorry to say, has assumed formidable proportions, I have tried faithfully to represent to you what are at present the predominant and controlling views and sentiments, as I see them, amongst the American people. I have met with much the same ideas among the great majority of neutrals with whom I have discussed the subject—neutrals from many countries whom I have had occasion to meet here in the last six months. If I have expressed myself freely, possibly in some respects even bluntly, I hope you will make allowance for the honest and deep anger and grief that move me when I see how, through a needless war wantonly started, Germany and England-France, the three countries of Europe, whom the world

needs most, the three races from whom humanity has most to expect, are engaged in tearing each other to pieces in senseless fury. I have welcomed with hope certain signs in the last few weeks, which seem to indicate that more moderate, fairer and calmer sentiments, a more correct understanding, and more far-sighted views are beginning to get a foothold in certain circles of Germany. You have so incontestably vindicated the prowess of your arms, and so impressively demonstrated the power, courage, self-sacrificing patriotism and high ability of your nation, that no possible suspicion could attach to you of yielding under compulsion, should you rise to the moral heroism of taking the first step towards dispelling the dreadful misery which weighs upon Europe through this appalling war.

What is done, is done. The guilt will be adjudged by history. Eleven months ago it was you who spoke the fateful word that meant war. Will it now be you, who will be the first loudly, frankly and courageously to speak the redeeming word that shall bring hope of peace? Whether such a word from you—a word, not of victorious peace, but of righteous peace, a word of human feeling and of political moderation, of conciliation, aye, and of atonement where due—would now be listened to by your opponents, in view of their bitterness at your actions and their mistrust of your intentions, and would actually accomplish peace, I do not know. But of this I am sure; that such a step would be welcomed with gratitude, gladness and sympathy by all at least of the non-combatant nations, and that it would be set down as a moral asset for you in the ledger both of history and of contemporary opinion; nor can I doubt that, even regarded merely from the point of view of politics, it would be wise, well-judged and timely.

Yours sincerely,
(Sgd.) Y.

NOTE: To this letter a short note only of acknowledgment was received, containing the intimation that, in view of the wide divergence of views between the writer and the recipient, no useful purpose would be served by continuing the correspondence.



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Correspondence

between an American

relative in Germany

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